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Heart of Stone

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HEART OF STONE

He comes from all directions.
First the wind is from the north;
the trees shudder under the weight
of the snow. He stumbles through your
doorway, shaking clumps of twigs
and snow. His eyes are ice-blue,
clear, the way the sky will be tomorrow.
His breath is cold
as the wind in your face.
His first words to you: This time
I stay. You are not ready
to believe, you offer him
a place by the fire
and not your bed, but
already his clothes melt
on your floor.
At the doorway, later, he swears
he'll be back when the wind
changes. He hands you a stone
made of ice, which you throw
in the fire as he disappears,
only days later the stone
has not melted.

From the east the wind
brings him with the stink
and push of cities. Tossing smog
from his hair, he walks
down the hill to your house
and pushes the brush
from him as he would
strangers. He stares at you
through the open window,
saying he's left it all behind.

He smells of too many
other women, and climbing
through the window he tells you
that only your flesh will wash
the scent from him. Though
the smell sickens you,
it is too hard to tell him
to leave when you know he's
already leaving.

The wind turns and the stone
he's left spreads the grime
of cities all through your house.

And he's back again
with the wind from the south
moving slowly now as though
the heat has drawn all
the winter from him. He
doesn't say a word and
your clothes fall from you
like birds. His eyes
hold yours too closely;
you aren't surprised
when everything happens
at once, but slowly,
and it almost lasts forever
in the languid night.

In the morning you wake
as slowly as you fell asleep.
He's left one flower for your hair,
and one stone.

As you move through your house that day
the new stone in your pocket
rubs against your thighs
warm and breathing
like some small animal.

If the wind is from the west
you have pockets full
of shells and sand.
He asks who you are:
you tell him the wind's name
and he takes it for his own,
pockets it like a talisman.
He tells you he never had a name,
that he is come from the same
western wind, that he has pockets
of shells and names his fingers
sift through.
It is not that you have
something he wants, but that
you are his stranger: in place
of his hands he gives you pebbles
to weigh your pockets and hold
you there. He tells you
he will stay
until you are his lover
and already you are left
holding only a small stone
turning it over.